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Japanese *Macbeth*
Shakespeare's Role on the International Stage

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Résumé

L'étude des pièces de théâtres Shakespeariennes se limite généralement aux performances et aux adaptations effectuées en Amérique et en Europe. Cet ouvrage se concentre sur le théâtre de Shakespeare en Asie, plus particulièrement, celui au Japon. La pièce étudiée dans cet ouvrage s'intitule « Noh Macbeth » et est une adaptation de *Macbeth* sur la scène japonaise nô. Le but de ce travail est de comparer le théâtre élisabéthain avec celui du nô, et d'établir par la suite si ces deux styles ont des ressemblances au niveau de l'adaptation Shakespearienne. Pour se faire, je propose d'évaluer le rôle de Shakespeare sur la scène internationale. Aussi, il est important d'étudier l'historique de *Macbeth*, à partir de sa création et à travers le temps, en passant par l'homme historique qui se trouve à la base du récit. Finalement, en regardant la place du théâtre nô au sein de la culture japonaise ainsi que l'adaptation de *Macbeth* dans ce théâtre, il sera possible de voir que, puisque le théâtre élisabéthain a disparu, le style théâtral nô se prête bien aux œuvres Shakespeariennes.

Mots-clés: Shakespeare, Macbeth, théâtre, Japon, adaptation, traduction, nô, renaissance, globalisation, élisabéthain

Abstract

Western scholars very rarely study Shakespeare in the Japanese sociocultural context, even though there is a vastly untouched plethora of knowledge pertaining to modern Shakespearean adaptations in the East. This thesis focuses on two seemingly distinct theatrical styles: Jacobean and *Noh*. While Shakespeare's original theatre has disappeared from the West, Japan has a similar traditional theatre in which his plays can be adapted. In truth, *Noh* theatre lends itself well to Shakespeare's rich characterisations and beautiful prose. To establish a concrete link between the two styles, I will examine a modern *Noh* play, entitled *Noh Macbeth* directed by Noriko Izumi (2006), and analyse it from the point of view of adaptation, culture, and history. Shakespeare's original text of *Macbeth* is also understudy, in its historical and political context. By the end of this thesis, the reader will notice how Shakespearean adaptations on the *Noh* stage offer new insights into the Bard's plays, as well as how Japan's cultural richness can be combined with Shakespeare's world-renown fame to create a different and enriching experience of his plays.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Macbeth, theatre, Japan, adaptation, translation, Noh, Early Modern stage, globalisation, Renaissance

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Glossary

Bunraku [文楽]	Japanese puppet theatre.
Hanamichi [花道]	Literally: 'Flower road'. A short platform that connects the main stage to the audience in <i>Kabuki</i> theatre.
Hashigakari [橋掛り]	A roofed 'bridge' that connects the main stage to the mirror room (dressing room) in <i>Noh</i> theatre. The actors enter and exit the stage through this bridge only.
Hayashi [囃子]	<i>Noh</i> musicians, also known as <i>nohkata</i> and <i>nohbayashi</i> . They use four types of traditional instruments on stage: flute (<i>nohkan</i>), drum (<i>taiko</i>), hip drum (<i>ohtsuzumi</i>), and shoulder drum (<i>kotsuzumi</i>).
Jiutai [地謡]	<i>Noh</i> chorus; considered to be part of the <i>nohbayashi</i> .
Kabuki [歌舞伎]	Japanese theatrical art form. This theatre dates to the seventeenth century. Kabuki mainly distinguishes itself with the use of specific make-up patterns, wigs, and <i>kimono</i> .
Karaori [唐織]	An exquisitely embroidered short-sleeved <i>kimono</i> used in <i>Noh</i> theatre.
Katana [刀]	Long and slim Japanese sword traditionally used by warriors and in martial arts.
Kouken [後見]	Stage attendants in <i>Noh</i> theatre.

Noh, Nohgaku Ancient Japanese theatrical art form that makes use of a very simple wooden stage and a minimal number of actors. This theatre is one of Japan's oldest art forms. It dates back to the fourteenth century.
[能楽]

Onnamen Mask worn on stage by men to represent female characters.
[女面]

Shite Main actor in *Noh* theatre.
[して]

Waki Supporting actor in *Noh* theatre.
[わき]

Note: All Japanese words used throughout this work have been romanised using the Hepburn variant, with the exception of the word 'noh' (能=*nou*), which is written in the most recognisable and most common variant in English.

*To my friends in Japan,
for having opened my eyes to a whole new world.*

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Foreword

The inspiration behind this thesis came from a life-long love affair with Japan and its culture; a world too little admired in the West. Japanese theatre has a special hold on the minds of those fortunate enough to see it performed live. From the traditional *Kabuki*, *Shingen* and *Noh* theatres, to the more modern theatre companies that pepper Tokyo's downtown area, Japanese theatre is an art of utmost beauty, æsthetics, and deep cultural meaning. Furthermore, seeing a Shakespeare play performed in a country where cultural traditions are still highly praised, affords a glimpse into Japan's gleaming Meiji Restoration era,¹ as well as Shakespeare's own Renaissance æsthetics. Shakespeare has always been an important inspiration in my life; he is a literary genius whom I have always held in high esteem. When I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to write this thesis, it was clear from the very start that I would be combining my love of Shakespeare with my love of Japanese culture.

In this thesis, at the suggestion of my programme director, I will focus solely on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* adapted in Japanese due to the fact that, out of all his tragedies, this one resonates the most with a modern audience. The esteemed Dr Harold Bloom, in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, writes: "[no] other drama by Shakespeare—not even *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *The Tempest*—so engulfs us in phantasmagoria" (516). This play indeed has a special place in the canon: it is a 'high' tragedy, but it is also imbued with magic and witchcraft. Perhaps, that is why many stage directors and actors alike think that the play is cursed, an idea that will be developed further on in this work. For the purpose of this thesis, I

¹ 1868 to 1912

will use *The Pelican Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Orgel, because of its faithful reproduction of the 1623 First Folio in which *Macbeth* appeared before songs were added to Shakespeare's text.

Macbeth was first written around 1606, during the reign of King James I (Orgel xxix). During King James I's reign, Shakespeare's acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, was changed to the King's Men, after which *Macbeth* was produced under the name of this new company. Interestingly, later additions to the source text² did not prevent *Macbeth* from becoming one of the Bard's most adapted plays. In his essay "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages," Gary Taylor writes: "the King's Men appear[ed] to have hired [Thomas] Middleton to adapt *Macbeth*, in about 1616: two songs, the goddess Hecate and some spectacular effects were added, moving the play decisively in the direction of baroque opera – innovations later endorsed, and expanded, by Restoration adaptations" (18). Nevertheless, these additions led to the best known and successful version of *Macbeth*. While the script we have today might not be as 'original' to Shakespeare as, for example, *Othello*, *Macbeth*'s tale of treachery, murder, and madness, is still sensational on stage. Indeed, Bloom ventures that we, as an audience, associate ourselves with Macbeth's character: "... there we find ourselves more truly and more strange, murderers in and of the spirit" (518). Macbeth, along with many other Shakespearean characters, can be found within ourselves, making him relatable and, naturally, adaptable to various cultural settings.

² Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* was highly modified from its original format and, the version that we have today has a substantial amount of input and revisions from people other than the playwright himself.

In Japan, several *Macbeth* adaptations have been very popular with the public, especially master director Akira Kurosawa's 1957 movie *Throne of Blood*. As interesting as that adaptation is, however, "... it departs very far from the specifics of Shakespeare's play" (Bloom 519). To compare Renaissance performances with Japanese ones, I wanted to use a Japanese stage production of *Macbeth* and contrast its representation of the characters to the ones in Shakespeare's text. While I could have chosen to work on director Yukio Ninagawa's highly successful and world-famous adaptation of *Macbeth*, aptly titled *Ninagawa Macbeth* (1985), I wanted to draw attention to a more obscure, lesser-known *Noh* production to contrast Shakespeare's original world with Japan's own 'ancient' art form. That is why I chose to use Noriko Izumi's 2006 production, entitled *Noh Macbeth*.³ This play was originally performed at the Osaka Museum of Art (MOA) and re-staged afterwards in other cities around Japan. The version I use for this essay is the live taping of the performance at the MOA, which can be viewed on the website MIT Global Shakespeares.⁴

Izumi's *Macbeth* is of great beauty and complexity; it is quite difficult to understand, even for a native speaker. According to the British Universities Film & Video Council (hereafter abbreviated as BUFVC), *Noh Macbeth* "... was created by professional Noh actors, to be performed for people who already understand the Noh conventions. It was not an experimental fusion theatre targeting Shakespeare scholars who are unfamiliar with Japanese classics" ("Noh Macbeth"). Therefore, we can assume that Izumi's audience was very well versed in *Noh* traditions unlike, for example, the foreign theatregoers who gather at *Noh* and *Kabuki* theatres,

³ Also known as *Shinsaku Noh Macbeth*, from the original Japanese: 新作能マクベス.

⁴ See "Noh Macbeth (Izumi 2006)", <https://gsvapa.mit.edu/noh-macbeth-izumi-noriko-2006/>.

hoping to see a facet of traditional Japanese culture. However, it is the latter audience that brings a new dimension to this type of work: seeing a performance in a foreign language and cultural setting can be alienating, thus allowing for a new theatrical experience to emerge.

The *Noh* style of this adaptation allows for a very lyrical interpretation of the great Scottish tragedy, whilst giving it an undeniable Japanese quality. For one, the actors are all dressed in traditional *Noh* outfits: *kimono* and masks are used to represent either male or female characters. Moreover, much like Shakespeare's own Renaissance theatre conventions, *Noh* theatre traditionally employs only male actors for their performances. This draws an interesting parallel between Shakespeare's seventeenth-century England and fourteenth-century Japan. Shakespeare's cultural legacy is felt through his plays and, as Minoru Fujita writes in his introductory essay to *Shakespeare East and West*,

... no one doubts that the meaning of each of his plays can most correctly be understood by reference to Elizabethan England and in the light of the mental attitudes of his Globe audience four centuries ago, just as Bunraku and Kabuki can most properly be understood and appreciated in terms of the cultural tradition that brought them forth and nurtured them almost as many years ago in Japan. (1)

While *Kabuki* is more often associated with Shakespeare, I felt that *Noh* theatre has an even higher affinity with Renaissance performances because of its staging techniques and powerful characterisations on stage. Fortunately, I am not the only one to believe this: "... a certain portion of Shakespearean scholars in Japan have unmistakably been induced, through their interest in Shakespeare, to reappraise the nature of *Noh*, *Bunraku*, and *Kabuki* as drama comparable with

Shakespearean plays" (Fujita 4). Compared to *Noh*, *Kabuki* is a lot more elaborate in its scenery, decors, and costuming, as for *Bunraku*, the puppet theatre, its aesthetics are quite different from the other two. Still, all three are naturally conducive to Shakespearean drama, which adapts itself well to these foreign styles. As one might expect, these three fundamental Japanese theatrical arts hold enormous cultural value both at home in Japan and abroad.

These art forms are so important to Japanese culture and world culture alike that they are all designated as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage(s) and are therefore protected arts. In truth, "one of the most important cultural treasures that modern Japan inherited from its feudal past is ... the supreme excellence of these traditional forms of theatre arts, and this invaluable body of theatre tradition has enabled *Noh*, *Bunraku* and *Kabuki* to rank among the most important art forms in the history of world theatre" (Fujita 6). This cultural heritage has been beautifully put to profit in thousands of plays over the years, encouraging Japanese artists to perform and develop their regional arts, as well as drawing attention to Japan from international scholars and theatregoers alike.

Since Ninagawa's landmark play *Macbeth*, the exportation of Japanese Shakespeare has increased and gained popularity abroad. As much as Japan loves Shakespeare, the world at large loves to see "Japanized Shakespeare," as Michiko Suematsu claims in "Import/Export: Japanizing Shakespeare" (162). Japan's 'exotic' take on the Bard's plays has great appeal in the West. However, "... it appears that Japan feels obligated to exploit its 'foreignness' in order to see its Shakespeare as an export commodity in the West" (Suematsu 162). To emulate the cultural history of Renaissance England, Japanese directors have had to turn to their country's traditional arts, hence adding to this sense of 'foreignness' once exported to other parts of the world. Indeed, in Hideki Noda's productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1990), *Richard III*

(1990), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1992), he found that "in search of a modern Japanese equivalent of the hereditary inheritance system that was intrinsic in Shakespeare's time, ... the world of Kabuki, Noh, Sado (the tea ceremony), Kado (flower arrangement), Yakuza, the emperor, and Sumo [fit well]" (Noda 1993, qt. in Hilberdink-Sakamoto 134). Clearly, *Noh*, *Bunraku* and *Kabuki* are inseparable when studying Shakespeare in Asia and, as such, they will be mentioned in conjunction throughout this thesis when discussing traditional theatre in Japan.

In this work, I wish to bring light to a subject rarely studied by Western Shakespearean scholars: Shakespearean adaptations in Japan. While countless essays and books have been dedicated to studying adaptations from English-speaking countries, little has been written—at least, in the West—about the more obscure Japanese adaptations. Even though Shakespeare is heavily studied in China, particularly in regard to the famous Beijing Opera adaptations, Shakespeare in Japan is a lesser known field and, in my opinion, is understudied. Several prominent Japanese Shakespearean scholars have been working on a similar subject, such as Dr Minoru Fujita, Dr Tetsuo Anzai, and Dr Ryuta Minami. These scholars have devoted their life's work to the study of Shakespearean adaptations, translations, and performances in Japan. By looking at their work on 'Japanese Shakespeare,' and combining their findings about the similarities between *Noh* and Jacobean techniques with my own research, I hope to establish a link between Renaissance and *Noh* performances. To do this, I propose to look at both stages' architectures, acting, and dramatic techniques.

The first chapter of this thesis will look at historical Shakespeare and his posthumous contribution to the world. How did Shakespeare put on plays during his era? Did his actors have a more significant role in his works and, did they shape the way we play them today? I will also examine the global phenomena surrounding Shakespeare's plays, more specifically, his

tragedies, and why they are still so relevant and adaptable today. The third area of research will focus on historical *Macbeth* and on a short analysis of this play, with a focus on the characters of Lady Macbeth and the three witches. The second chapter of this thesis will examine the place of *Noh* theatre in Japanese culture, as well as its rich cultural background. Afterwards, I will define Shakespeare's role in Japanese theatre, both traditional and modern. Finally, I will look at how Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is adapted to the Japanese stage by analysing Izumi's *Noh Macbeth*. The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the *Noh* stage lends itself well to Shakespeare's created worlds, and, if so, if it is close to authentic Renaissance performances.

1. Will in the World

1.1 Elizabethan Shakespeare and his World legacy

William Shakespeare could not possibly have known that his works would become so much loved, respected, and revered. Yet, here we are, four hundred years after his death, and his plays are extensively studied, read, and adapted all over the world. It is interesting that Shakespeare's iconic Globe Theatre, where most of his plays were performed, would bear such a name in the first place. Even the Globe's motto "'*Totus mundus agit histrionem*' (translated in *As You Like It* as 'All the world's a stage')" (Taylor 1) foreshadowed Shakespeare's future success. Indeed, the Globe's fortuitous name had more in common with the Bard's staying power than what the Elizabethans might have thought: the world really did become Shakespeare's own playground. In fact, as Anthony B. Dawson explains in his essay "International Shakespeare": "from the beginning, Shakespeare has occupied an international space. If we exclude the histories, almost all his plays are set beyond the borders of England – all but one comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, one tragedy, *King Lear*, and one romance, *Cymbeline*" (176). During the Renaissance period, Shakespeare's works were not unaccustomed to exportation. According to Dawson (2002), as soon as his plays were performed in London, they would start being played in and out of England; in foreign lands and in different languages.⁵ While it might seem difficult

⁵ The author writes: "... performances began migrating shortly after they originated on London stages, with touring companies taking versions of the plays to foreign shores. Aside from the celebrated performances of Hamlet on board the good ship Dragon off the coast of Sierra Leone in 1607–8 (not strictly speaking international in that they were performed primarily for the entertainment of the English crew), there are records of continental performances

or even impossible to extricate the man from his masterpiece, 'Shakespeare' stands for two very different things:

... we can perhaps detect the important dialectic between Shakespeare as a 'national' playwright ideologically implicated (for better or for worse) in a nation building project inextricably linked to the ambitions of (British) empire, and Shakespeare as a writer who belongs to the world and who has been appropriated by nations such as Russia, Japan and especially Germany as uniquely their own.

(Dawson 177)

Shakespeare's works are inarguably universal "...but [they] noticeably [differ] from country to country" (Fujita 2). This much might seem obvious, considering how each country has its own cultural heritage, rites, and traditions. His universality is, perhaps, not in the sense that his plays are perfectly transposable to any non-English culture in the world but rather, as Jonathan Bate puts it: "because Shakespeare was supremely attuned to his own historical moment, but never wholly constrained within it, his works lived on after his death through something similar to the Darwinian principle of adaptation" ("Shakespeare's Globe"). In other words, Shakespeare's works have endured the centuries because of their adaptability. Still, "... Shakespeare is of universal interest to mankind living in any part of the world and belonging to any type of cultural tradition" (Fujita 7). In a way, Shakespeare's versatility is what makes him still popular today. Shakespeare is so global that his works have been translated into every language known to man

on the part of 'English comedians' from as early as 1585, when a troupe of English players performed at, of all places, Elsinore. By 1604, when a version of *Romeo and Juliet* was played at Nördlingen, some of Shakespeare's plays (simplified and foreshortened) had begun to make their appearance in Germany and eastern Europe" (Dawson 176).

and have been performed on stages in all four corners of the world. Indeed, "Shakespeare endures because with each new turn of history, a new dimension of his work opens up before us" (Bate, "Shakespeare's Globe"). With every new adaptation, a whole new Shakespeare is born. His works are constantly changing and evolving, which, in turn, make him a timeless master wordsmith. However, regardless of his current success, unfortunately Shakespeare struggled more in popularity when he was alive than after his death.

Shakespeare had a short-lived popularity, compared to his contemporaries such as John Fletcher. However, in a particular moment "[in] the Christmas season of 1604/5, seven plays by Shakespeare, and two by Jonson, entertained the royal family. This [was] the high-water mark of Shakespeare's popularity, accurately reflecting his theatrical dominance in the last decade of Elizabeth I's reign" (Taylor 18). Elizabeth I was a great patron of the arts, and especially liked Shakespeare's plays, which explains his popularity during her reign. After government laws passed forcing actors to use clean dialogue on stage, "Shakespeare's earlier plays [which] had been full of profanity, as defined by that statute, ... had to be retrospectively purged in revivals" (Taylor 17). Shakespeare's post-mortem popularity is nothing too shocking: the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century revivals of his works helped re-popularise him, as well as encourage other countries to turn to him for inspiration. In fact, Shakespeare's availability contributed greatly to his enduring success. Bate writes that:

... Shakespeare's Folio was reprinted three times before the end of the century. And through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, there was a major new edition of his Complete Works once every 20 years or so.

Shakespeare thus quickly became more available than his contemporaries
- though the text in which he has been transmitted since the early 18th century
has not been that of the Folio authorised by his own players. ("A Man for all
Ages")

Shakespeare himself was a great actor of renown, both before and during his writing years. Robert Cohen writes in his book *Shakespeare on Theatre* that "... [Shakespeare] was clearly a well-respected and very active performer. His name is at the very top of the twenty-six person list of 'Principall Actors in all these Playes' that were cited in the 1623 First Folio of his collected dramatic works" (3). Shakespeare played on stage as an actor "... at least until 1604" (4), only two years before his publication of *Macbeth*, and two years after having written *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. His legacy, therefore, extended beyond his written works: he was a successful actor, writer, and producer. Sadly, the former and the latter are often disregarded in favour of his obvious successes as a playwright. Nevertheless, his presence on the Renaissance stage was markedly important since he portrayed several of his own characters alongside his actors.⁶ Perhaps the most famous Early Modern actor, Richard Burbage was one of those people who played for and with Shakespeare.

He and Burbage, his best actor and long-time friend, were theatre-mates from a very young age when both of their fathers' paths crossed. In fact, Richard Burbage's father, James Burbage, led "... the Earl of Leicester's Men that came from London to perform in Stratford" (Cohen 1). Later in life, Shakespeare employed many of his good friends as actors in his plays.

⁶ To know which parts he acted in his own plays, see "Shakespeare's Actors (I)." Internet Shakespeare Editions, University of Virginia, 2011, <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/stage/acting/burbage.html>.

It is no secret that, as it was the convention at the time, Shakespeare employed only male actors to perform in his plays. He also made use of pre-pubescent boys to play the roles of female characters. "Like modern choirboys," writes Gary Taylor, "the performing boys of early modern England were often trained to sing ..." (7). The idea of cross-dressing actors is not limited to Shakespeare's Renaissance performances. Indeed, several other cultures have made use of this technique in their own theatres. As John Russell Brown explains in his book *Studying Shakespeare in Performance*:

the widespread practice of cross-gender casting has often been noticed as an analogue to Elizabethan practice, but the most frequently cited examples are the Japanese Noh and Kabuki and the Indian Kathakali which all employ mature men as their heroines, not the 'boys' or young men of Elizabethan times. (219)

While both *Kabuki* and *Noh* traditionally employed men only, modern companies now hire women as well for their performances. In Izumi's *Noh Macbeth*, for example, one of the stage attendants is a woman. She can be seen near the end of the play, moving the main actor's props from the stage. However, disregarding the modern iterations of these ancient arts, their original forms were very similar to Renaissance theatre in more ways than one. The simple stages, elegant costumes, and male-only cast are all intrinsic to both styles. In terms of acting, some ancestral theatre forms like *Noh* and *Kabuki* encourage their actors to choose which type of acting they will be doing for the rest of their careers. The same can be said of more modern theatre companies, such as *Takarazuka*, an all-female musical theatre troupe, which is especially famous for upholding this type of practice. At the start of their drama training, *Takarazuka* actresses choose whether they will be *otokoyaku* (male performers) or *musumeyaku* (female performers) and this, for the entire duration of their career. Oftentimes, in a re-staging of a play

that is particularly successful, well-known characters will be redesigned to suit the specific skills—whether it be dancing or singing—of the new actresses who portray them.

Interestingly, this type of practice draws another parallel with Shakespeare who wrote his characters in concordance with his actors. For example, Hamlet and Othello were both played by Richard Burbage and, as such, were written to 'fit' with his specific set of skills. Shakespeare trusted his actors to develop his characters on stage in a way that would bring them to life off the page. According to Gary Taylor, Shakespeare's plays

... were written to be read by a particular group of actors, his professional colleagues and personal friends. He could rely on those readers to bring to their reading much specialist knowledge about theatrical conditions and working practices, and the circumstances of the specific company to which they and he belonged. (4)

Shakespeare's implicit trust of his colleagues was commendable, and something that is rarely seen today. Today's playwrights hold fast to their stories and characters and are more reticent at the idea of having actors tamper with the original material. Shakespeare's plays today are treated much differently: each line and each word are deeply revered, and directors and actors alike believe that they must be delivered in a certain 'authentic' way. Indeed, "... when faced today with the finesse and multiple demands of Shakespeare's dialogue, the usual resort of English-speaking actors is to avoid improvisation and take endless trouble to choose how each sentence and line will be delivered" (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 221). Even though modern-day actors avoid improvisation as much as possible, perhaps that is more of a hindrance than an advantage. There is a certain lack of fluidity when lines are 'perfectly' delivered. This

rigidity of form turns the piece into something that is stiff and removed from the audience, like watching something on television rather than in person. Still, Shakespearean actors in the West are known for their high level of acting skills and flawless interpretations of some of the Bard's most famous and timeless characters. Playing one of Shakespeare's characters in a major production becomes almost like a rite of passage for young actors looking to make a name for themselves in this business. Even movie stars, like Sir Ian McKellen and Maggie Smith, have had their fame decided by their beginnings in Shakespearean plays as stage actors.

Shakespeare routinely quick-starts actors' careers all over the world and his plays are still considered to be benchmarks by which we create new plays and especially literature. Indeed, the Bard has a strong presence in literature as well. Shakespeare's 'literature' became the basis for many literary works we hold in high esteem today. Furthermore, "... the plays began to influence not just the theatre, but poetry more generally. The works of Milton, notably his masque *Comus*, were steeped in Shakespearean language ... Shakespeare was Milton's key precedent for the writing of *Paradise Lost* (1667) in blank verse rather than rhyme" (Bate, "A Man For All Ages"). Even more contemporary writers, as Bloom (1998) explains, sought inspiration from Shakespeare's masterpieces for their own classics; Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) was largely influenced by *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, while Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) is linked to *Hamlet*, to name only a few. Shakespeare's far-reaching popularity has been at the centre of thousands of pieces of art, in all modes of expression—television, film, literature, stage, music, painting—and in every century.

Unfortunately, even though Shakespeare's modern productions are incredibly popular, the traditional techniques and style of the Renaissance theatre are not much in use nowadays. What was lost can never be retrieved, especially not anything pertaining to Shakespeare's

original texts and his theatre productions. By ‘forgetting’ how to stage plays in the Jacobean style, the West has lost a great amount of history and culture along with the arts themselves. Toshiro Date writes in his essay “A Bridge Between Shakespeare and the Traditional Theatre of Japan”:

how fortunate we would be, if the English theatre had preserved Shakespeare as it was in the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare which amply imbibes Elizabethan wild passion must be moving enough even to modern people. Let me refer, for example, to the scene of Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth*. This is the very coagulation of weird vindictive passion. Its presentation is certain to stir up the primeval darkness lying in modern people's minds. (100)

Unlike several Asian countries who have fought hard to preserve their ancient stage cultures, the English-speaking world seemed all too happy to forget about its history in favour of more modern styles. We can only imagine what *Hamlet* or *Romeo and Juliet* looked like performed on the Globe's circular, open-air stage, and the way the plays were spoken⁷ and staged is anyone's guess. However, we can surmise that Shakespeare's productions must have been vastly different from our own: his actors had free reign in deciding exits and entries as well as how certain characters should be played,⁸ the audience could stand all around the raised stage and,

⁷ Not in terms of how the language sounded, but rather as how the lines were spoken and performed by Shakespeare and his actors.

⁸ Gary Taylor writes: “Shakespeare's texts, nevertheless, uniformly fail to supply such minimal information [of entries, exits, costumes, and words sung]. Why? Because Shakespeare expected his fellow-actors to fill in those obvious blanks. That is, he expected parts of the minimal performance script to be ‘written’ by the actors with whom he was collaborating” (4).

most importantly, his richer patrons could sit in balconies and admire his work first-hand.⁹ Shakespeare's own productions of his plays must have been quite a sight to see.

1.2 Experiencing *Macbeth* Globally

Since losing the Early Modern stage upon which Shakespeare's plays were performed, experiencing Shakespeare today is a much different activity than it was in every other previous decade. Men have tried to rebuild Renaissance theatres in "... more modern style[s] ... but the Renaissance idea of total theatre or *theatrum mundi* was never to return there" (Fujita 18). Indeed, countries have built several modern 'Globes' in their major cities, such as Japan's very own Globe Tokyo. Since 'Shakespeare' as a household name is continuously evolving and expanding, it is only natural that experiencing his work on stage changes drastically from one production to the next. In Japan in particular, "... the dramatic excitement obtained through reading Shakespeare's plays or through seeing their productions on the stage is cognate with the dramatic sensation, similarly deep-felt or heart-gripping, experienced in some of the most powerful scenes of traditional plays of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki" (Fujita 4). This is partly why Japan's traditional theatrical arts lend themselves so well to Shakespearean narratives.

Shakespeare's plays often contain fantastical creatures, such as fairies (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), ghosts (*Hamlet*), cambions (*The Tempest*), gods (*Venus and Adonis*), and witches (*Macbeth*). The presence of these creatures especially excites our minds and our imaginations. Interestingly, *Noh* and *Kabuki* resonate with these types of characters: in native plays, there are usually otherworldly beings present on stage. However, while the two styles

⁹ See Platter, Thomas. *Thomas Platter's Travels in England 1599*. edited by Clare Williams, Jonathan Cape, 1937.

mesh well together, that is not to say that Shakespearean drama did not influence Japan's native theatre in a way that changed the face of theatre work in Japan. Dr Fujita writes that:

... Shakespearean scholars in Japan who are truly aware of the excellence of Kabuki and other theatrical traditions of their country are, in my opinion, gifted with a particular deep insight into the timeless value of Shakespeare's drama as theatre art, and therefore have become more interested in the unalloyed, definitive representation of genuine human passion or true vital force to which each of Shakespeare's plays is originally meant to give exhaustive expression.

(Fujita 8)

Human condition is very much a central theme to Shakespeare's plays; most of his characters—at least, the ones in his tragedies and histories—suffer to great extents. This makes them even more relatable to the audience, as they can 'recognise' themselves in these characters. This is where the director's real task becomes apparent: the need to link Shakespeare's characters and their woes to a contemporary audience. Indeed, the director will need to follow modern psychology and philosophy in order to "... fabricate a plausible relevancy between Shakespeare's drama and the realities of today's world" (Fujita 19). Since we do not live in the sixteenth century anymore, Shakespeare's plays could be perceived as being 'dated' and irrelevant to our society, however, nothing could be further from the truth.

Directors and actors have found ways of adapting his works so that they are wholly relevant to us. For example, Kurosawa's movie *Throne of Blood* is portrayed in a way that resonates perfectly well with a Japanese audience: in this version of *Macbeth*, Taketoki

Washizu¹⁰ is a blood-crazed *samurai* who takes hold of a feudal stronghold, the 'Spider-Web Castle.' Even though this seems at first completely different from *Macbeth*, people aware of the original play will inevitably draw links between the two and see the similarities and recurring themes throughout the movie. Therefore, *Throne of Blood's* viewers perceive and experience Shakespeare's *Macbeth* differently than, let us say, a Shakespeare in the Park production. Nevertheless, the core feelings that emanate from the story remain the same.

While experiencing Shakespeare at home is one thing, seeing his work while abroad and in a different cultural context is a whole other experience. In truth, "[the] very act of sitting among audiences whose ways of life and ideas about life and art are very different from one's own will immediately draw attention to the difficulties of full comprehension" (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 222). Attending a play in a foreign country, regardless of the linguistic and cultural barriers, offers a completely different experience of the same play performed at home. Truly, there is a sense of "... enjoyment of theatrical events when we do not understand a word that is spoken on stage. Not only do we follow the action and empathise with the persons in the play, but physical images from Asian performances will often stay locked within our minds long after we have returned to Europe" (225). This can become a positive experience, regardless of the linguistic and cultural hurdles that stand between the viewer and the stage. Even though our understanding of the spoken words might be diminished or even annihilated, other aspects of the play become more prominent and draw our focus. For example, we might notice the costumes or the scenery more, or maybe we would pay more attention to

¹⁰ In this version of *Macbeth*, all the characters' names have been changed from the original story. Taketoki Washizu is Lord Macbeth's equivalent in this movie.

the music and the sounds on stage. Either way, "... sitting in an alien theatre, one realises that no theatrical event can be adequately represented by quoting a text, describing on-stage action, or by showing videos of a performance: it grows out of an entire social context at a precise moment in time" (222). This social context is dependent on the culture in which the performance is being played. Our comprehension of *Throne of Blood* in our own living room with subtitles, versus seeing it in a Japanese cinema in Japan, will drastically alter our perception of the very same play (or in this case, movie). Shakespeare's presence on the foreign stage has led fans and theatre amateurs to seek out different performances in different mediums and countries. This attraction to transcultural/transnational adaptations is even more apparent when examining live stage performances. Brown explains that:

Many of the older and regional forms of Asian theatre, being neither heavily influenced by Europe nor the dependent on complicated set-design and technical support, are also of interest to Shakespeareans because they rely so continuously on improvisation ... [an] audience experiences the drama as it takes life before their eyes, each moment in fresh creation, without pre-programming. The actors respond to the actual progress of the play's action on each and every occasion it is performed ... (*Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 221)

Improvisation, combined with the captivating effect of a foreign stage, creates a much more profound impression in our minds than a play performed in a style we are used to seeing. Interestingly, there is a real affinity internationally for Shakespeare's tragedies, more so than his histories and comedies. The reason tragedies are so much more adaptable than his other works is because of the transposable nature of the narrative to any other culture. Indeed, the world more or else experiences 'tragedies' in the same manner: "people use the word tragic to

refer to the kind of loss and suffering that they believe to have a universal valence that goes beyond its times” (Huang 4). Shakespeare’s tragedies are, therefore, incredibly human in nature and every person in the world can relate to them, one way or another. In her essay “‘It is the East’: Shakespearean Tragedies in Asia”, Professor Alexa Huang explains why Shakespeare’s tragedies are so adaptable:

... tragedies such as *Hamlet* are more frequently adapted around the world because of their malleability and capacity to be detached from their native cultural settings. The plays seem elastic because—as opposed to comedies that latch on to more culturally specific reference points (such as the truce between England and France in *The Comedy of Errors*, 3.2)—tragedies can be reconstructed to deal in broad strokes with more generalizable, hence transportable, issues (4)

Macbeth’s fame and popularity truly influence and inspire stages around the world, far beyond its native shores. The BUFVC counts a “... database of approximately 4,000 titles, for all known Shakespeare film, television and radio productions, plus some audio productions and video recordings of stage performances, from 1899 to the present day, and worldwide in scope” (“Project History”). In terms of *Macbeth* adaptations, according to the University of Victoria’s online database of film and stage performances, there have been approximately 147 performances world-wide between 1905 and 2016.¹¹ In *Adaptation of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology*, the authors introduce a South African adaptation of *Macbeth*, entitled *uMabatha*, by playwright Welcome Msomi. This adaptation “...tells the story of Shaka, an early nineteenth-

¹¹ See “Shakespeare in Performance”. *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca>.

century Zulu chief made legendary by his martial skills, brutality, and autocratic rule” (Fischlin, Fortier 164). Like Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Shaka goes through the same woes of prophecies, murder, and madness. Often, *Macbeth* retellings take on the characteristics of the country where they are being adapted. Shaka is clearly no Scottish lord but he is a similarly powerful character and is much more relatable to his South African audience. As Nelson Mandela explains, “...the similarities between Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and [redacted] Shaka become a glaring reminder that the world is, philosophically, a very small place” (qt. in Fischlin, Fortier 165). There are more resemblances than differences between the two plays and this, due to the deep human condition represented by *Macbeth* and his peers. Much like in the Japanese *Noh Macbeth*, *uMabatha* “... stages ethnic and linguistic differences, even as it shows those are no guarantee against violence and deception” (165). Indeed, *Macbeth*’s frightful violence remains the same, no matter which version of the story is created or in which language it is performed.

It is understandable, therefore, why a play such as *Macbeth* is repeatedly adapted and played. *Macbeth* has a strange and uncanny pull on our spirits and manages to enter our psyches and remain there. The character of *Macbeth* is not immune to his own magnetic characteristics and suffers greatly throughout the play. While on one hand, he plots and murders, on the other, he loses himself along the way. The man who initially didn’t have the strength to commit horrible acts ends up in a bloodbath of his own making. This inevitably pushes him into a blood-thirsty madness, which extends to his beloved wife, the initial instigator of all this mayhem. According to the editors of *Stages of Drama: Classical to Contemporary Theater*, *Macbeth*’s true strength lies in its polarity: “... [the tragedies] are all about imposing figures in extremely trying situations. This emphasis on extremes is the source of the tragedies’ special power”

(Klaus et al. 250-1). Macbeth's hard law juxtaposed to the tenderness between him and his spouse further throws this play into a vortex of emotions.

In his famous soliloquy, Macbeth declares in anguish after the death of his wife, "... Out, out, brief candle, / Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more. ..." (*Mac.* V.v.23-26). Shakespeare likens Lady Macbeth's life to that of an actor, preoccupied with the 'here and now' of stage work, unaware of the ephemerality of life. Lady Macbeth's life revolved around seemingly insignificant 'struts' and 'frets,' and ended in tragedy, as did Macbeth's, slain by his enemy's son. As a tragedy, it is impossible to ignore the raw feelings of grief, suffering, and pain caused by Macbeth, but also, the sympathy felt at the pain he suffers from his own actions. Macbeth's conscience weighs heavily and, as we will see later in Izumi's adaptation, this pain overflows into the afterlife. Macbeth's tragedy, both caused and endured, is so human that we cannot look away from it and, as Bloom (1998) says, we inevitably recognise ourselves in the great Scottish warlord.

1.3 The Tragic History of *Macbeth*

As per the title of this section, we can see that *Macbeth* is not only a tragedy, but also a historical account of a Scottish tragedy. Apparently, Shakespeare's reason for writing *Macbeth* was politically motivated. Shakespeare wrote this famous play for the new Scottish King, James I, who "... traced his ancestry back to Banquo," however, "there is little about the play to suggest that Shakespeare's purpose was to celebrate his patron's lineage, just as there is nothing straightforward about the history Shakespeare chose to dramatize" (Orgel xxviii). The real history behind the historical Macbeth is muddy, but from historical records, we know that:

Mac Bethad mac Findláich ... was born in around 1005. In August 1040, he killed the ruling king, Duncan I, in battle near Elgin, Morayshire [after which he] became king ... In 1054, Macbeth was challenged by Siward, Earl of Northumbria [and Malcolm's uncle] ... In August 1057, Macbeth was killed at the Battle of Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire by [Duncan's son] Malcolm Canmore (later Malcolm III). (*BBC - History - Historic Figures*)

Historical Macbeth's reign lasted fourteen years, compared to Shakespeare's Macbeth who ruled for an undetermined amount of time, although presumably a short period of months. Shakespeare clearly villainised historical Macbeth who, in comparison to Macbeth in the play, "...[seemed] to have ruled equably, imposing law and order and encouraging Christianity" (*BBC - History - Historic Figures*). The events that succeed one another in the play are pure conjecture and fantasy on Shakespeare's part, which therefore distance his Macbeth from the historical king. As such, the play's Macbeth becomes more of a simulacrum of the real Macbeth, a mere shadow with which Shakespeare could build his tragedy. Although Shakespeare shaped his story in ways that diverts from history, one of his more obvious flight of fancy was the inclusion of the supernatural throughout the narrative.

As mentioned before, several parts found in today's version of *Macbeth* are not original to Shakespeare. The most obvious one is the addition of songs which figure right from the very start of the play. The first two lines are spoken by the first Weïrd Sister¹² and read as follows: "When shall we three meet again? / In thunder, in lightning, or in rain?" (*Mac. I.i.1-2*). In truth, these two lines, as well as the subsequent ones, belong to Thomas Middleton, playwright of the

¹² Spelling according to *The Pelican Shakespeare* edition, 2016.

sixteenth-century and Shakespeare's contemporary. The purpose of this addition was to make the play more adaptable: "... the introduction of songs was part of a more extensive revision that was probably to adapt the play for performance at the Blackfriars, an indoor playhouse first used by the King's Men after 1609 and providing conditions more like those at court than those at the Globe" (Brown, *Macbeth* 3). Shakespeare's witches were therefore not singers originally. However, as we will see later in this work, this significant change to the text turned out to be beneficial, especially in terms of Japanese adaptations and the link between Renaissance theatre and *Noh* theatre.

The three witches clearly "... open the play and set the tone for it" (Orgel xxxii): they drive the narrative, they manipulate the other characters' destinies and their mere presence on stage adds a layer of mystery to an otherwise ordinary medieval conflict. The use of witches is, however, a common trope in theatre, especially on the Early Modern stage. These mysterious characters like the ghosts, too, ... are quintessential theatrical devices: they dance and sing, perform wonders, appear and disappear, fly, produce visions—do, in short, all the things that, historically, we have gone to the theatre to see" (Orgel xxxii). We can see how important they are in the way the plot is driven forward: if it were not for the witches, Macbeth would probably never have tried to usurp King Duncan's throne. Indeed, they are the ones to tell Macbeth that he will become the next ruler:

FIRST WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH. All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!

(*Mac*. I.iii.48-50)

Upon hearing such a prophecy, Macbeth sets out to claim what is 'rightfully his,' enlisting his wife's help along the way. In terms of theatrical techniques, the stage setting for the witches was quite an event in the Jacobean era:

Actors playing gods, ghosts, demons, and other supernatural characters could pop up from the underworld through a trap door on the stage or descend to earth from heaven on a winch line from the ceiling. Off the stage, the ripple of sheet metal could create thunder. Stagehands set off fireworks to create omens, meteors, comets, or the wrath of the Almighty. (Cummings)

The witches would have, therefore, been introduced on the stage with great pomp, signalling to the audience their otherworldliness. Clearly, the witches are not to be trifled with since they are the ones to augur Macbeth's destiny. Their presence not only elevates the play to another mystical sphere, it also dictates the outcome of the narrative right from the start. Surprisingly, Macbeth is not afraid of them and seeks counsel from their arts. Lady Macbeth even mentions that her husband himself is prone to 'visions': "My lord is often thus, / And hath been from his youth" (*Mac.* III.iv.54-55). Much like the witches, Macbeth is, therefore, a seer of sorts who can commune with the spirits, namely Banquo, much to his lords' fright. Still, his wife remains unphased by all these supernatural occurrences.

Lady Macbeth is a tremendously interesting character, and, like the Weïrd Sisters, she is a large influence in Macbeth's life. Indeed, she pushes Macbeth to pursue his plan of treason when he falters at the thought of killing Duncan because "He hath honored me of late" (*Mac.* I.vii.32). Lady Macbeth, however, is not about to let her husband ruin their only chance of becoming monarchs:

LADY MACBETH.

What beast was't then

That made you break this enterprise to me?

When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man.

(*Mac.* I.vii.47-51)

Lady Macbeth can twist and control things in her and her husband's favour. Indeed, "... her powers of both analysis and persuasion ... will prove irresistible to the masculine ego" (Orgel xl). By telling Macbeth to 'man up,' she unleashes within him a desire to be more than complacent and to avoid living as "... a coward in thine own esteem" (*Mac.* I.vii.43). Through her ambition, she is essentially sealing his fate, much like the witches did before her. The true power seems to be given to the women throughout the play. While the men are at war and killing one another, the women plan and plot in the background. When Macbeth refuses to return to see the bodies of the king and his chamberlains that he murdered, Lady Macbeth cries "Infirm of purpose! / Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead / Are but pictures." (*Mac.* II.ii.55-57) and proceeds to smear the king's blood onto his servants to cover up the murder. Once again, she shows her great strength of character and unflinching willingness to dirty her hands for her husband's sake.

Unfortunately, however, all this blood and mayhem sends the lady into a fit from which she never recovers. Her fall into insanity and later, death, indicates the weight of bearing treason and murder in her heart. The curse of the murders haunts the Macbeths to the point of insanity, wherein Lady Macbeth compulsively washes her hands: "Out, damned spot! Out, I say!" and

“... What, will these hands ne’er be clean? / ... / Here’s the smell of the blood still. All / the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand” (*Mac.* V.i.35, 43-51). Lady Macbeth’s relentless washing of her hands is symbolic of her wanting to clean her conscience. Indeed, the murders weigh heavily on her, causing her to lose her strength and retreat within her mind. In terms of psychology, the theory of embodiment helps to explain Lady Macbeth’s compulsion. Indeed, “... the moral purity metaphor is derived from the embodiment of abstract mental morality with concrete sensory experiences” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Winkielman *et al.*, 2015; Lee and Schwarz, 2016, qt. in Tang et al.). Since psychology, as a field, did not even exist at the time of writing *Macbeth*, Shakespeare, without knowing, created a psychological effect that, until then, was unbeknownst to the world.

Upon seeing the sickly queen, the doctor in *Macbeth* even declares that “This disease is beyond my practice. Yet I have / known those which have walked in their sleep who / have holily in their beds” (*Mac.* V.ii.58-60). Lady Macbeth’s actions are a clear indication of her guilt. In a study, conducted on the subject of embodiment, participants were encouraged to recall guilt, which prompted them to wash as a physical response to a mental stimulus (Tang 2017). According to the authors of the study, “... actual physical cleaning reduced the spontaneous brain activities in the right insula and MPFC, regions that are involved in embodied moral emotion processing ...” (Tang et al.). In other words, Lady Macbeth’s ritualistic hand-washing inadvertently alleviates her conscience, if only for a little while.

This descent into madness was brought on by the queen’s own dark desires and her inability to ignore her conscience. However, let us not forget that this sad series of events initially unfolded because of the Weird Sisters’ prophecy. When Hecate, the Greek goddess of witchcraft, becomes enraged with the witches who dared “To trade and traffic with Macbeth /

In riddles and affairs of death;” (*Mac.* III.v.4-5), she decides to exercise her divine punishment. Consequently, she cruelly curses Macbeth: “He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear / His hopes ‘bove wisdom, grace, and fear; / And you all know security / Is mortal’s chiefest enemy” (*Mac.* III.v.30-32). Sadly, Macbeth can do nothing to avoid his fate—his torment and suffering are inevitable and, as we know, he suffers a great loss when his wife succumbs to her guilt-induced madness.

Is it any wonder, then, how the curse within the play extended itself outwards into our lives? According to lore, “a coven of witches is said to have cursed the play for eternity in revenge for Shakespeare’s inclusion of [the witches’] spoken spells, with ingredients such as an adder’s forked tongue, the eye of newt and a frog’s toe. King James I, who commissioned the first English version of the Bible in 1604, banned the play for five years” (Kemp). We can expect that Shakespeare’s Early Modern audience would have held a morbid curiosity for these strange old women, especially since the Witch-hunt was thriving at that time. Macbeth’s curse is clearly born from witchcraft, which must have been scary yet intriguing to see on stage. Whether we believe or not that the play itself is cursed, it does not change the fact that its inescapable otherworldliness captures and ensnares our imaginations, time and time again. *Macbeth*’s ability to survive all these years is, therefore, due to its deeply human quality, its real-life history, and its mysticism that has us wondering whether ghosts and witches roam the nights.

Analysing *Macbeth* from the point of view of the supernatural is paramount to understanding the *Noh* performance. Indeed, since *Noh* heavily relies on the supernatural, it stands to reason that a play such as *Macbeth* would fare well on its stage. While there are several interesting and complex characters in this play, the deliberate focus on Lady Macbeth resonates with her presence on the *Noh* stage, which will be discussed further on in this thesis.

2. When Two Worlds Collide

2.1 The *Noh* tradition

For four hundred years, *Noh* theatre has remained vastly untouched. Watching a *Noh* performance live is like looking into the past and seeing a snapshot of what life was like at the Imperial court. Every gesture and every word spoken on stage is highly refined and deeply imbued with four centuries worth of culture and history. Unlike western theatre that seeks to imitate, for example, Renaissance theatre, *Noh* remains unchanged from its original form and remains true to itself. There is no need in *Noh* theatre to copy what previous generations have done since the art form has never evolved 'with the times.' Indeed, "... traditional theatre forms and principles have survived through the adversities of modernization and destructive wars and more or less successfully maintained their original shapes up to this time" (Fujita 9). Western theatre is constantly changing and adapting itself to new decades and fashions, causing, in turn, the loss of traditional art forms. Comparatively, types of theatres in Japan can be divided and compartmentalised into two different styles: the ancient arts of *Noh*, *Kabuki*, *Kyogen*, *Bunraku*, *Shingen*, etc. that still strive, and the 'new' format wherein modern Japanese drama offers fresh plays to its twenty-first-century audience. In the 'old' traditional forms, "[older] methods of performance are preferred to modern ones, and traditional dress, customs, speech, and ideas have prevailed without suffering serious change for hundreds of years" (Fujita 5). Even though Japan has had a tumultuous history, its people managed to hold on to their cultural values and heritage.

The *Noh* tradition is very much the same today as it was four hundred years ago. This means that people interested in this form of art must follow very strict rules when becoming *Noh* actors. They are separated into five distinct types: *shite* (main actor), *waki* (supporting actor), *hayashi* (musicians), *jiutai* (chorus) and *kouken* (stage attendants).¹³ Due to its highly traditional form, *Noh* actors very rarely change roles, and this, for the duration of their whole career. While there is no such distinction within English theatre, the resemblance between the two forms lies in the fact that they both traditionally employed men only—theatre was a male-exclusive world until 1660 in England and 1948 on the *Noh* stage. *Noh* theatre has a very rich cultural background, having originated in China, and consequently exported to Japan during the Nara Period.¹⁴ At first, *Noh*—or, *Sangaku* as it was known then—was used for the sole purpose of entertaining the royal court. However, at some point, a new form emerged from *Sangaku* and became more popular with the public. This new art form was to become what we call today the *Noh* genre. It especially gained momentum during the Edo Period as well as after the Imperial revival of the Meiji period. The new government sought to modernise the country "... through westernization" (Suematsu 155). Indeed, the "... Meiji government founded the Engeki Kairyo Kai, or the Drama Reform Committee ... to 'improve' Japanese theatre with Shakespeare" (155). The government felt that Shakespeare was needed to reform and make theatre interesting once more. While this conclusion was problematic in terms of colonisation and self-deprecation, this radical action nevertheless spurred a huge amount of Shakespearean adaptations into Japanese.

¹³ See: "Composition of Noh", <http://www.the-noh.com/en/world/forms.html>.

¹⁴ See: "Origins and History", <http://www.the-noh.com/en/world/history.html>.

From this need to translate and adapt the Bard's words into Japanese, hundreds of versions of his plays were produced, creating a wide-spread interest in Shakespeare: "what had started at the end of the Edo period as bizarre tales from distant lands became an instrument of enlightenment in the Meiji period, and since the Second World War the dramatist has gradually secured a position as the cornerstone of Japanese theatre" (155). During this period, Shoyo Tsubouchi, playwright and famous Shakespearean stage director, saw "... in Shakespeare certain similarities to Kabuki plays, such as the mixture of the serious and the comic, the inclusion of music, and a certain formality (he deduced) in acting style" (Ono Masahi 1989, qt. in Suematsu 157). Today, Shakespeare still holds a special place in Japanese theatre and remains one of the most adapted and produced non-Japanese playwrights. Shakespeare productions are highly successful in Japan and continue to survive the passing of time by being continuously modified to fit the aesthetics of Japanese society, culture, and history.

Performances in traditional Japanese theatres are of a completely different nature than on European or North American stages. Indeed, when it comes to *Noh*, *Kabuki*, and *Bunraku*, "... the audience [gives] a different kind of attention to the play, as if what is happening on stage has a different relationship to the off-stage world" (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 215). These theatrical styles lend themselves to a transcendental experience for the audience who watches them take place. Truly, performances such as Izumi's *Noh Macbeth* linger in our minds and extrude strange feelings from within ourselves.

Noh dramas are extremely pleasing to any type of audience since they are imbued with so much cultural richness. The depth of its history can be felt in the actors' carefully uttered verses and in the swelling of the music and chanting during a scene's climax. Everything on the *Noh* stage is carefully crafted with its vast history in mind. Interestingly, *Noh* actors never

rehearse as a group before a performance, preferring instead to let the flow of the play guide them. This is incredibly unusual in the eyes of a western audience, for whom professional performances are usually rehearsed multiple times before the main presentation. While there might be no group rehearsals prior to a performance, this does not mean that a Noh drama is unstructured. On the contrary, each actor spends hours upon hours crafting his art and perfecting it, according to the established norms and rites of this genre of drama.

Decidedly, "a Noh drama is remarkable for its delicacy of structure and its exquisiteness of symbolism ... There is strong formality, inflexibility and predictability in the Noh performance, and there can be no 'unexpectedness' in it" (Fujita 12). Most importantly, the *experience* is what is truly paramount in a *Noh* production. Audience members should feel transported to another world during a performance, surrounded by its beauty and symbolism. "In the Kabuki plays," writes professor Toshitiro Nogami, "if the actor's speech is not understood, it is difficult to follow the development of the action, but in the Noh plays, the plot is simple, and a spectator may easily grasp the theme with a few words of explanation beforehand and, leave the rest to his eyes and ears" (9). Even though the language used in *Noh* is complex, the transcendence felt from a *Noh* play is incomparable to any other form of theatre. The experience of this transcendence is born mostly from what we see (the costumes, the dancing, etc.) and what we hear (the music and rhythmic chanting) as opposed to the text itself. Truly, "... Noh drama[s] sometimes [seem] to be designed solely to create in [their] audience an experience of an exquisite moment of absolutely genuine human passion" (Fujita 16). Naturally, one must realise by now why *Noh* lends itself so well to Shakespeare's plays: both have a certain quality about them that makes them incredibly human yet surpasses the ordinary. By contrast, however, Shakespearean plays are renowned for their beautiful, poetic language: Shakespeare's

true talents lie in his mastery of words and poignant character development. How, then, does the *Noh* style adapt his words and transpose them to its own culture?

As mentioned before, the language in a *Noh* play is incredibly difficult to understand and, therefore, it is not as central to the play as Shakespeare's famous lines were in his. Japanese theatregoers themselves have difficulty understanding the language and must, therefore, rely on either script pamphlets or on other aspects of the play (such as music, costumes, etc.) in order to draw sense from it. Indeed, "... if you go to a Noh theatre, you will be surprised to find some of the audience gazing at a libretto open on their knees, and rarely looking at the stage, but following the actor's recitation so that it may improve their own" (Nogami 8). Instead of focusing only on words and delivery, *Noh* theatre's beauty relies on its exquisite form and musicality. Although important, Shakespeare's words become almost secondary to the action being performed on the *Noh* stage in favour of the slow, ritualistic, and calculated movements, which entrance the audience and capture their undivided attention. It is impossible to lose focus during a *Noh* performance: every part of the play pulls you in and keeps you riveted to the scene. This singular power of captivation is unique to *Noh* and has no western equivalent. Shakespeare's plays take on a whole new dimension on this stage, one that is completely new and unique to Japan and its ancestral culture. Izumi's *Noh Macbeth* is magical in itself: the expertise of the actors combined with rich Shakespearean characters, all wrapped up in a deeply traditional art form.

Naturally, connecting with the audience is essential for creating an enjoyable performance. Therefore, theatres need to rely on two main things: an engaged audience and well-versed actors. As Anthony Gerstle elaborates in his article "The Concept of Tragedy in Japanese Drama," "theatrical stylization rests upon two pillars: one is the creation of an audience

in tune with the signs and symbols, the artifice of performance, namely mime, dance, song, declamation, music, costume, props, themes; the second is transmission to the younger generation of actors” (57). This is especially true in *Noh* and in *Kabuki*, wherein current-day actors are often sons and grandsons of great actors in the same style. The acting duties become filial ones too—honour, family traditions, and cultural traditions all combined, creating an all-rounded actor who lives and breathes his art. This strict tradition is in part due to Zeami Motokiyo, a Japanese playwright in the fourteenth century who constructed the elements and form of *Noh* theatre as it is known today. Zeami was a prolific writer, critic and theorist, who, under the patronage of Lord Ashikaga Yoshimitsu,¹⁵ helped popularise and develop *Noh* for a more refined audience. After becoming the *shite* in a major acting company, the Kanze Group, Zeami “... arranged and improved his father's repertory dramas as well as created many new *Noh* dramas.”¹⁶ Zeami’s work enabled several generations of theatre aficionados to appreciate *Noh* in all its splendour. Today’s *Noh* is not unlike Zeami’s theatre, which prided itself on its beauty and elegance.

2.2 Shakespeare in Japan

As previously mentioned, Shakespeare was brought to Japan during the Meiji period when the government sought to boost its own culture by taking inspiration from European art.¹⁷

¹⁵ Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimizu ruled during the Muromachi Period (1338-1578). He is especially known for having commissioned the *Kinkakuji* (Golden Pavilion) in Kyoto.

¹⁶ See “The Words of Zeami: His Dramatic Life”, <http://www.the-noh.com/en/zeami/>

¹⁷ Gerstle writes: “Western culture was deliberately mythologized, especially during the Meiji period, when the nation was intent on modernizing itself to the standard of Western Europe” (“Shakespeare and Japanese Theatre” 64).

Since then, Shakespeare's plays have been adapted hundreds of times on the Japanese stage and remain crowd favourites for even the most casual theatregoers. Why is it that Shakespeare still holds Japanese audience's attention to this day? According to the authors of "Shakespeare on the Stages of Asia," "commonality of language, culture, history, country and 'race' conspire to naturalise Shakespeare's otherwise highly 'unnatural' cultural longevity. By the same token, the sheer discontinuity and remoteness represented by 'Asia' exposes not just the longevity of Shakespeare but the workings of cultural value itself" (Gillies et al. 259). There is an obvious affinity between Shakespeare's Elizabethan and Jacobean plays and Japan's traditional arts since most successful Shakespearean adaptations have been 'in the style of' Japanese cultural icons (such as *samurai* culture). Indeed, audiences were quick to realise that "... the power and impact of the traditional drama of Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki are as appealing to the deepest instincts of humanity and as thoroughly penetrating of the deeper strata of human consciousness as Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theatre" (Fujita 5). Due to his immense popularity on the Japanese stage, Shakespeare became 'local' as opposed to foreign. Furthermore, "Shakespeare was indigenised not just in terms of theatre genre, which was mostly Kabuki at the earliest stage, the popular indigenous theatre, involving speech, song and dance, but also in terms of source and cultural motive" (Gillies et al. 259). The works of Ninagawa, for example, show this indigenised Shakespeare who "... came to seem ever more indigenous, though somewhat less cosmopolitan" (262). By indigenising Shakespeare to Japan, his works became more readily available and adaptable. Moreover, as Linda Hutcheon explains in *A Theory of Adaptation*, indigenisation "... implies agency: people pick and choose what they want to transplant to their own soil. Adapters of traveling stories exert power over what they adapt" (150). The importance

of making Shakespeare 'one's own' is especially apparent in Japan, which encourages the use of foreign works of literature.

While Tsubouchi imported the entire Shakespearean canon to Japan, all of it was eventually transposed and transformed to fit the Japanese stage. However, in more recent years, "the unselfconscious localism of the Meiji adaptations is no longer possible, nor the unreflective imitativeness of *Shingeki*. The last two decades have seen an outpouring of eclectically indigenised Shakespeares in both translation and adaptation, featuring actors from *Kabuki*, *Noh* and *Kyogen*" (Gillies et al. 265). Now that Shakespeare is truly 'Japanized,' his works are even more studied and interpreted with Japanese aesthetics attached to them. Naturally, Shakespeare's language must have been a problem for the very first translators who sought to convert the Bard into Japanese. Indeed, since English and Japanese belong to two very different linguistic families, Germanic and Japonic, respectively, similarities between the two languages are very few. Furthermore, Shakespeare's Early Modern English is quite 'dated' compared to the current version we use every day. As such, the task of translating and interpreting his language into Japanese must have been quite an arduous one.

Though primarily a translator, Tsubouchi was also a famous Shakespearean adaptor and director. He preferred *Kabuki* in terms of theatre styles and imbued Shakespeare's works with a distinctively Japanese quality. Indeed, his "... Shakespeare productions can be regarded as a blend of *Shingeki* and *Kabuki*. They suggest the former in their faithfulness and use of western costuming and stage design, and the latter in their vocal delivery (the style and phraseology of the translations was based on *Kabuki*)" (Gillies et al. 261-2). *Shingeki*, the 'new drama' quick-started by Tsubouchi's blend of the old and new theatrical art forms, had "... established itself as a theatrical genre by detaching itself from indigenous forms of theatre such as *noh* and *kabuki*,

while adding Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Japanese as well as other Western realist plays to their repertoire” (Minami 76). Shingeki theatre sought to replicate Shakespeare’s Elizabethan and Jacobean plays in the most authentic way possible: “... [it was] regarded as one of the surest and safest, and hence correct, ways to remake the ‘genuine’ Shakespeare on the Japanese stage” (78). Still, by 1975, “... Shingeki Shakespeare became utterly old-fashioned” (Suematsu 160) because of the Japanese’s desire to break away from this restrictive style. Subsequently,

the new types of Shakespeare growing out of the underground theatre movement turned the attention of audiences away from the literal realism of Shingeki Shakespeare as well as its infatuation with authenticity. As if a long spell had been broken, Japanese practitioners ceased slavish imitations of western methods and felt free to search for new, up-to-date, and characteristically Japanese ways of staging Shakespearean plays. (Suematsu 160)

This 'Japanification' of Shakespeare was ultimately beneficial in bringing his works to life in a land far away from his native audience. Indeed, Daniel Gallimore claims in his essay "Speaking Shakespeare in Japanese: voicing the foreign" that "... the challenge of translating, performing, and above all understanding Shakespeare has served to strengthen and enrich native cultures ... Moreover, any emphasis given to orality over visuality can be said to emphasize the local above the global" (42). In this way, Shakespeare could be appropriated and become local, just as much as any other native playwright, and subsequently became known as 'Japanese Shakespeare.'

When examining Shakespeare on the *Noh* stage, one thing becomes very clear: the musicality of the spoken word in Japanese, compared to the original English, is completely different and changes the text dramatically. Since *Noh* actors speak in meters, the cadence of

the lines changes from what we are used to hearing. Back in the earlier stages of *Noh* and *Kabuki* theatre, "... a line of around 25-syllables was the most that an actor could utter in a single breath ... any loss of musicality [was] more likely to be a fault of performance than translation" (Gallimore 45). This is important to highlight, seeing as Shakespeare's language can be complex in English, let alone in Japanese. Furthermore,

Japanese translations of Shakespeare have been notable for their prosody by which is meant the conscious manipulations of the sounds of syllables, words, and groups of words to literary effect. Translators have exploited the accentual patterns of colloquial Japanese and potential phonological harmony, as well as drawing on native literary devices such as syllabic meter and word play... (44)

Although complicated to translate while retaining as much of the original rhyme as possible, having Shakespearean plays performed in Japanese is not necessarily a drawback: "... on the contrary, ... with adequate training and experience, Shakespeare's subtle versification and language could provide the stimulus for improvised performances that would respect the structure of the play's action and respond to the conditions of each performance on stage and in the auditorium" (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 221-2). As we know, *Noh* follows very strict guidelines for performances, but also, as mentioned before, there is a small percentage of the play that falls into the category of improvisation, since all the actors do not rehearse together before a performance, to allow for fluidity and spontaneity.

Interestingly, by exporting Shakespeare to other countries and having them interpret his works according to their own culture and theatrical styles, this enables the West to examine Shakespeare in a different light. Fujita writes: "an encounter with the total theatre in the East

has created among Western critics and scholars a new insight into the possible way Shakespearean drama can be reinvigorated through rejecting its binding language-based tradition of the theatre of the past" (14). By further internationalising Shakespeare, and allowing cultural exchanges to take place, stage directors and actors in the West could gain a lot of insight from non-English Shakespearean adaptations for inspiration in their own work. Thus, plays like Ninagawa's 1980 *Macbeth* gained tremendous momentum in the West and was performed at the Edinburgh International Festival (1985) as well as at the Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival (2018).

Truly, Ninagawa's interpretation of Shakespeare's work took on a life of its own. In a way, this overarching popularity of foreign adaptations transform these works into original content: "given the large number of adaptations in all media today, many artists appear to have chosen to take on this dual responsibility: to adapt another work and to make of it an autonomous creation" (Hutcheon 85). If adaptations are, in a way, original works, then what does this mean for the works from whence they were created? According to Hutcheon (2012), there would be a desire to supplant Shakespeare's indestructible literary supremacy and cultural identity with one's own adaptation of the very same work. To take on a Shakespeare play and to transform it into something beyond that, is all but impossible. Naturally, there have been countless brave attempts to replace or even surpass his four hundred year old works with modern iterations and yet, he still outshines and dominates the theatrical world. Can adaptations surpass the original works? Perhaps, but that is a question for another day. Hutcheon's theory that adaptations become 'autonomous works' can be applied to Japan's adaptations which, initially, sought to emulate Renaissance theatre as closely as possible but later, detached itself from this tradition in favour of recreating Shakespeare's works with a Japanese cultural flair.

2.3 Shaping *Macbeth* for the Japanese stage

One look at Izumi's *Noh Macbeth* and we can clearly see that this play has departed from Shakespeare's original version. While the dialogue, the characters, and the plot remain virtually the same, the distinctive *Noh* style creeps in and assails the viewer with a sense of otherworldliness. Surprisingly, "in Asia, as in Shakespeare's England, some highly sophisticated theatre performances, as well as very simple ones, are given with almost no technical support" (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 217). Costume-wise, *Noh Macbeth* stands in a stark contrast to the Jacobean style. All the characters are dressed in fairly simple *kimono*, with stark colours and no embellishments. This stands in opposition to the King's Men's *Macbeth* in which

... they had to reproduce convincingly the splendour of contemporary aristocratic dress. In a world without synthetic fabrics or cheap mass-produced apparel, such splendour could only be represented by expensive fabrics, in many cases by the actual articles of clothing formerly worn by the nobility. (Taylor 12-13)

Noh makes use of simple costumes, except for when a major character or a deity appears on stage. This particular costume, the *karaori*, is said to be "an exquisitely embroidered, traditional woman's kimono [and is] certainly one of the most beautiful theatrical costumes in the world."¹⁸ Comparatively, *Kabuki* uses *kimono* that are usually decorated in ways to reflect different social statuses. These simple yet cumbersome costumes, however, serve a specific purpose within a *Noh* or *Kabuki* play: "while the strange and complicated physical representations of the drama

¹⁸ "Costumes", <http://www.the-noh.com/en/world/costume.html>

are hard to understand or appreciate—outlandish, impractical costumes, grotesquely inhuman make-up, improbable physical movements— what is experienced in the imagination can be simple, compelling, and, sometimes, overwhelming” (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 220). Indeed, costumes, masks or make-up, strange chanting, combined with haunting music, simple scenery, and inhuman characters on stage, create a deep sense of otherworldliness, familiar yet distant from what we know to be true.

In *Noh Macbeth*, the first people to enter the stage are the *hayashi* and, soon afterwards, the *waki* enters as a travelling monk, mentioning how after leaving the capital, he came across a strange sound of "a bird or a demon."¹⁹ Setting the stage for things to come, the monk will be one of only three actors present in this production; the two others being the *shite* who plays Macbeth's ghost and a castle guard, and the second *waki* who plays Lady Macbeth's ghost as well as a fantastical creature or, rather, an apparition. As per tradition, the *shite* plays double roles:

in a formal Noh play there are two scenes—the ‘fore’ scene (Mae) and the ‘after’ scene (Noti). The First Actor [shite] enters the stage in the form of an ordinary man in the ‘fore’ scene and in his true form in the ‘after’ scene, thus though representing a single character, he is differently attired in the two scenes.

(Nogami 44)

Tetsuo Anzai in his essay "Theatre Structures East and West— Some Basic Similarities" supports the idea that, as in all *Noh* plays, "the *waki*, or the secondary character, plays the role

¹⁹ From the original Japanese: "...鳥かまた魔物か", Izumi (2006), my translation.

of an intermediary between the shite, the main character, and the audience ..." (45). In this particular play, the monk serves as a bridge between the audience and the history of Macbeth's treachery. The character of the Buddhist monk is also indicative of a higher force at play. Indeed, *Noh* often focuses on phantasmagorical elements and, true to its form, *Noh Macbeth* follows these rules.

This is a very common set-up in *Noh* and is part of the aesthetics of this genre of theatre. A play performed in the *Noh* style "... dramatizes a superior communion with a dead person whose soul reappears in this world, and a great deal of poetic artistry and genius is spent on the creation of the reality of the returning ghost" (Fujita 17). Macbeth is therefore represented as a ghost on this stage and, therefore, allows for a different interpretation of Shakespeare's play. Instead of seeing the action from the point of view of the living, we are offered a glimpse into the after-effects of Macbeth's treasonous deeds, after his own death. In this way, "... the play can truly achieve genuine tragic solemnity through the skilful introduction of the important dramatic function of the Ghost that genuinely characterizes a *Noh* tragedy" (Fujita 17). Macbeth's ghost holds a great role in terms of *Noh*, but also when compared to his 'original format' i.e., living and breathing in medieval Scotland.

Noh is highly ritualistic in its portrayal of characters and settings. Indeed, several aspects of the stage contribute to strengthening the sense of otherworldliness felt through the play. Notwithstanding the *hashigakari*, which is a pathway meant for spirits, the pine tree painted on the front of the stage is also an indication of the spirit world. Since Macbeth is a ghost in this play, the pine tree and the *hashigakari* serve to introduce him to the audience as such. Indeed, "[the pine] is an apparatus to induce the spirit of the main character to come down to the theatre and take possession of the actor who plays the role, and the *hashigakari* is, in fact, the bridgeway

along which the spirit thus called down proceeds onto the stage proper" (Anzai 48). The 'spirit' of Macbeth is therefore called down from wherever it is lying-in-wait and is 'asked' to show itself to the audience in the form of the actor. Due to this theatrical device, *Noh*'s shamanistic origins become very much apparent upon breaking down a performance such as this one.

Furthermore, there are several distinct styles within *Noh* that dictate what kind of play will be performed. Unlike western theatre, *Noh* theatre is divided into five types of performances: *kami* ('god' play: featuring a deity), *shura* (fighting play: about warriors), *katsura* ('wig' play: featuring a female protagonist), *gendai* (realistic play) and *mugen* or *kirinoh* (fantastic/supernatural play).²⁰ *Noh Macbeth* falls under two of these categories: *shura* and *mugen*. The latter is especially relevant to detect the staging differences between a western production and a Japanese *Noh* production.

Compared to Ninagawa's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) movie in which "... Macbeth [was] a warlord [in sixteenth-century Japan] contending for the throne ..." (Suematsu 162), *Noh Macbeth* takes place in London and in Scotland, like in the original play. Even though the characters changed a little bit in this specific Japanese version, the setting remained similar to the original, as well as the lack of scenery. Indeed, *Noh* theatre's lack of decor resembles Renaissance productions in the fact that "actors did not have to compete with scenery; actors *were* scenery ... Actors were not only scenery that physically moved, they were scenery that moved emotionally" (Taylor 15). In the same way, the focus in a *Noh* play is on the actors and their skills, rather than backdrops and fancy props. Generally, "in Asia, as in

²⁰ See: "Noh theatre", <https://www.britannica.com/art/Noh-theatre> and, "Composition of Noh", <http://www.the-noh.com/en/world/forms.html>.

Shakespeare's England, some highly sophisticated theatre performances, as well as very simple ones, are given with almost no technical support" (Brown, *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* 217). Usually, the only props used during a *Noh* performance are handheld fans but sometimes, other objects can also be brought on stage. In Izumi's *Macbeth*, Macbeth's ghost enters the stage with a *katana* and wields it around during the entire play. Nevertheless, whether it is one or two props on stage, this style is very simple compared to some more elaborate contemporary western performances.

Japan's traditional arts make use of very simple stages and scenery, meaning that "Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki are not adaptable to the stages of theatres with proscenium arches or more modern theatres in the round, or any theatres with semantically neutral and plastic stage spaces" (Fujita 9). Each theatre style has its own stage architecture that works best for its performances. In *Noh*, the stage is square and made of wood, with a small 'bridge', the *hashigakari*, which, as previously mentioned, "... originally symbolized the passage along which a spirit found its way onto the main stage" (Fujita 11). This type of stage has become synonymous with *Noh* theatre and cannot be disassociated from it. Truly,

it is impossible to disjoin the performance of Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki from their native stage conditions, and the same must have been true of Shakespeare's drama which had its origin in the Renaissance English theatre, and which, in more ways than we can imagine today, must have referred to its traditional theatrical codes (Fujita 10).

As Fujita explains, *Noh* is inextricable from its historical stage and, as I also believe, Shakespeare's Renaissance theatre is also reliant on its original stage conditions. Considering

the lack of scenery and props, music is therefore instrumental to any *Noh* play, as it allows the actors to express their character's minute expressions and feelings through sounds. For example, the *shite* will stomp on the stage at very specific moments in the play to communicate non-verbally with the audience. Also, the *hayashi*, who play different kinds of traditional instruments on stage, will add to the overall atmosphere and will support the actors throughout the play. Musicians in *Noh* plays have their own strict training to follow in order to be allowed on stage, so much so that "Noh chanters [*jiutai*] have developed their own traditional artistry: Noh musicians [*hayashi*], divided into three groups of *ohsuzumi* (bigger hand-drum), *kotsuzumi* (smaller hand-drum) and *fue* (flute), have inherited their individual artistic techniques ..." (Fujita 11-12). Similarly, the Renaissance stage also used "instruments such as oboes and cornets ..." (Cummings). Fortunately, the use of music and chanting in *Noh* theatre fits well with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in which several scenes are sung. For instance, the scenes in which the Weïrd Sisters appear are musical.

Naturally, the real 'star' of the play is the ghost of Macbeth and, as in any *Noh* play, his appearance on stage signals the true intent of the play. Everything about the play is centred on the ghost of Macbeth and his reason for showing himself to the monk (and, by proxy, to the audience). As Anzai explains:

... a *Noh* play as a whole is often constructed in the form of a revelation; first, in the sense that the crucial point of a play comes at the moment when the hidden identity of the *shite* is revealed to the *waki*, and hence to the audience, but also, and more importantly, in the sense that through this revelation and the *shite*'s chanting and dancing about his or her past resentment, remorse, or longing, the

heart of the meaning of the play is revealed. This meaning is further underlined by the chanting of the chorus. (45)

The Weïrd Sisters, namely, become a chorus to Macbeth's tragedy. In *Noh Macbeth*, while there are no actors who explicitly represent the witches, the *hayashi* and the *jiutai* echo their presence by chanting in the background of the main dialogue. The *hayashi* routinely make vocal sounds in rhythm with their instruments, while the *jiutai* sings or chants to accompany the actors. When Macbeth's ghost 'roams' the stage in the second half of the play, the *jiutai* and the *hayashi* can be heard singing about his strange half-asleep, half-awake state,²¹ indicating that Macbeth is neither 'here nor there' and stands in a sort of limbo on stage.

Although clearly not a musician, Lady Macbeth plays an equally important role in this play, as she did on the Early Modern stage. In the original play, as we have discussed earlier, she was the powerful instigator of her husband's subsequent tragedies, to the point of madness. However, her presence on the *Noh* stage is reduced to that of a ghost, compared to the more active role she had in Shakespeare's original text. Still, Lady Macbeth is far from being devoid of power. In fact, "in the dramatic traditions of East Asian cultures with a Confucian inheritance, while women's agency is often undermined, women gain an upper hand when they return as ghosts or mediators in religious contexts" (Huang 3). Lady Macbeth bemoans her fate when she appears as a ghost on stage. The *waki* who plays her wears an *onnamen* and an exquisite *kimono*, to indicate that this character is female. She first appears walking down the *hashigakari*,

²¹ From the original Japanese “夢現”, Izumi (2006), my translation.

repeatedly wailing “Lord Macbeth, Lord Macbeth,”²² apparently searching for her husband’s spirit. Like the Lady Macbeth that we are familiar with, this Lady Macbeth also rubs and washes her hands compulsively, saying “ah, it won’t come off, it won’t come off” and “even though I wash and wash, it won’t come off,”²³ in reference to the blood spilt during her lifetime. Even in death, Lady Macbeth is haunted by the aftereffects of her choices made in life. Interestingly, *Macbeth* performed in this style offers a glimpse into the afterlife of Scotland’s notorious regicides.

Unlike in Shakespeare’s original theatre, *Noh* has a particular ability for staging ghosts and gods, as well as humanising them in the eyes of the audience. Lady Macbeth’s fate is heart-wrenching in this version of the play: her spirit is stuck in a loop of ‘washing’ the blood from her hands whilst roaming the castle in search for her husband. The witch-like character in the play even says of her that “even after death, she is a wonderful woman,”²⁴ denoting Lady Macbeth’s continued devotion and steadfastness. Evidently, the *Noh* style lends itself well to Shakespeare’s play and adds an extra dimension to an already complex and multi-faceted tale. Izumi’s adaptation is, ultimately, a wonderful ode to Shakespeare but also, it is a shining example of true-to-form traditional *Noh* theatre, completely seeped into the history and the culture of its native country. This ‘Japanized’ Shakespeare shows how the Bard’s popularity remains on the world’s centre stage, very much alive and well.

²² From the original Japanese: “マクベス殿 マクベス殿”, Izumi (2006), my translation.

²³ “ああ落ちぬ落ちぬ” and “洗へども洗へどもとれぬ”, Izumi (2006), my translation.

²⁴ “死して後もさてもさてもわわしい女ちゃ”, Izumi (2006), my translation.

Conclusion

William Shakespeare's hold on the world's imagination has been relentless and unbreakable for over four hundred years. Unbeknownst to him, his life's works would become the source of inspiration for many, both linguistically and artistically. Countless authors, poets, and playwrights have turned to Shakespeare for inspiration, creating new and exciting works in addition to world-approved classics. Shakespeare's themes retain a certain human quality that is unique to his work and which is why his works survived the centuries. His works inspired so many people, during and well after his death, even though perhaps not all original to him. As Catherine Belsey explains in *Why Shakespeare?*, Shakespeare himself was inspired by other writers at home and abroad, borrowing and integrating new cultures along the way from "... Latin poetry, Roman comedy, Chaucer, popular romance, and racy Italian narratives ..." (11). Nevertheless, he expertly reworked these stories and created new ones too, where his language helped reshape them and make them timeless and recognisable all over the world. The Bard's universality makes him not only a British cultural icon but also, a world figure. Belsey briefly highlights how his words have been used around the world for different effects:

many Germans feel ... that Shakespeare belongs to them. Slogans from Shakespeare were used to inspire soldiers in the trenches on both sides in the First World War. The old Soviet Union made films of Shakespeare ... In Japan Akira Kurosawa ... drew on the Noh traditions ... Shakespeare is also well known in India ... (1-2)

Shakespeare's works belong to the whole world and yet, they belong to no one. While some scholars believe that Shakespeare's enduring genius is a fabrication,²⁵ it is hard to deny that he is one of—if not the most—quoted, adapted, studied, and admired playwright in the world. Indeed, there have been many attempts to discredit him and his works in favour of other writers. As Fujita highlights: "[there] has been a long history of Shakespeare criticism in the West. Shakespeare's works have survived all the new tests and examinations...." (6). Truly, none of his contemporaries have managed to maintain a similar level of fame. Christopher Marlowe and John Fletcher, for example, even though prolific in their time, are very rarely played today and virtually unknown outside of academic circles. Without us even knowing it, Shakespeare has fully integrated our societies and has become part of our daily lives.

Shakespeare is responsible for common everyday proverbs such as “to be green with envy”, sourced directly from Iago's line “Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy! / It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock / The meat it feeds on” (*Oth.* III.iii.170-173), or the saying “to wear one's heart on one's sleeve”, also taken from *Othello* (1603). His beloved characters such as Touchstone, the court jester in *As You Like It* (1599), whose name is most easily recognised as being a Walt Disney subsidiary studio, Touchstone Pictures, is only one example out of thousands of current references to his works. While most people might not realise it, Shakespeare is deeply ingrained in our society and the echoes of his words can be heard in our everyday language. Indeed, Shakespeare invented over 1700 words that we still use today (Mabillard 2000), such as “addiction” (*H5* I.i.54), “birthplace” (*Cor.* IV.iv.23), and “skim milk”

²⁵ See: Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present*. Hogarth Press, London, 1989.

(*IH4* II.iii.34), to name only a few.²⁶ It is no wonder, then, why his tales of sorrow and love, passion and murder, treachery and villainy, are constantly evolving and being re-adapted into different languages and cultures. Out of all his works, as was discussed throughout this thesis, Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, *Macbeth*, is perhaps the most human of all his plays.

Macbeth is, as Jonathan Bate explains, "a world in which your every move is watched. ... a world in which you have to take sides" ("Soul of the Age" 342). There is no middle ground for Macbeth and his wife: either kill and survive or grovel for all of life. As we have discussed, Lady Macbeth could never allow the latter to take place. She had to take matters into her own hands and make Macbeth a king. To stage such a play during King James I's reign must have been challenging, to say the least. Indeed, "in the absence of newspapers and television, there were just two places where the public gathered together to be informed, cajoled and provoked to thought on great issues of religion and politics: the church and the playhouse" (343). An assassination on stage must have been quite sensational during the turbulent Jacobean era. Bate explains that the play was "... written shortly after the state security service foiled a plot to blow up the royal family..." (342), further establishing how, during violent times, a violent play might have been received.

Clearly, Macbeth's bloody violence went hand in hand with the politics of its day. Naturally, since the play *Macbeth* was based on a historic medieval Scottish king, the violence is easily explained by it taking place only a few decades after the Dark Ages. Regardless, this thirst for blood inspired countless adaptations to follow the initial staging of the play. Always

²⁶ See "Shakespeare's Words", <https://www.shakespeareswords.com/> for a full glossary, and "Shakespeare-online", <http://shakespeare-online.com/biography/wordscoined.html> for the complete list of words and terms.

relevant, *Macbeth*'s tale of treason is transposable to any era, culture, and country. Kurosawa's aptly titled movie adaptation, *Throne of Blood*,²⁷ is concrete proof of how the themes found within *Macbeth* are global and relevant to audiences far removed from Shakespeare's native England.

Macbeth's success elsewhere is in part due to its adaptability, but also because of pure popularity, as authors Fischlin and Fortier explain in *Adaptations of Shakespeare, A critical anthology of plays from the seventeenth century to the present*: “*Othello* and *King Lear* are represented in more than one adaptation. This is because these plays, along with *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest*, are ones which, for whatever reasons (prominence, contemporary relevance, controversy, historical taste and circumstance, and so forth), have inspired a large number of adaptations” (1). As I elaborated in subchapter 1.2, audiences around the world have an affinity with Shakespeare's tragedies, more so than his comedies and histories. That is explained by the fact that people relate more easily to the notion of ‘tragedy’ than anything else. Tragedies are universally felt inevitable and uncontrollable events that are identical for every human: everyone lives through loss and grief at some point in his or her life. Therefore, it is no wonder why *Macbeth*, who is so deeply imbued with raw humanness, is part of a select canon of works that have survived and maintained popularity due to their turbulent history and adaptability.

²⁷ Interestingly, the original Japanese title, 蜘蛛巣城 (*Kumonosu-jo*) translates as “Spiderweb Castle”, a direct reference to the castle that the warrior Washizu (aka Macbeth) sieges. The transliterated title *Throne of Blood* is an English interpretation and has nothing to do with the original title, however, it resonates more clearly with the overall feeling of the movie and of the play.

Globalisation and trade were immensely important in Shakespeare's day. Since the discovery of the Americas and beyond, the previously sheltered Euro-centric world had been expanding at an exponential rate and, with it, strange tales, customs, and habits made their way to England where Shakespeare and his contemporaries drank it all in. "During his lifetime," explains Anston Bosman in his essay "Shakespeare and Globalization," "cultural exchanges multiplied not only among European nations, but between Europe and the Atlantic and, more slowly, Pacific worlds. Many of these growing interdependencies left their mark on Shakespeare's writing and theatre, from advances in stage design to an explosion of literary sources in print" (285). From the very start of his career, Shakespeare was attuned to global matters and was aware of other cultures and their stories. Since Shakespeare was a borrower and adapter himself, it is only natural that his own works should go through the same journey of translation, adaptation, and interpretation.

Naturally, adapting Shakespeare into other languages and transposing his works to vastly different cultures creates issues of authenticity and originality. Some scholars worry about the faithfulness of these adaptations to their original form, causing a rift between those who seek to perform Shakespeare as purely as possible, and those who wish to rework his plays and create new and interesting works of art from them. This only serves to accentuate the lack of research in the field. Fischlin and Fortier explain that,

Although Shakespeare himself produced theatrical adaptations and despite his place at the centre of the canon of English literature, theatrical adaptation has remained a relatively marginalized and under-theorized activity. When it has been the object of consideration, it has often been judged and understood in opposition to a criterion of 'originality' – often, paradoxically, to the assumed

originality of Shakespeare. Moreover, adaptation has been found lacking in 'fidelity' to the original work of whichever canonical figure is being adapted. (4)

Evidently, between alleged curses and frightened cast members, being banned, and difficulties with staging and adapting the play on stage and on screen, *Macbeth*'s journey across time and space has been wrought with difficulties since its initial appearance on the Jacobean stage. However, its survival shows how Shakespeare's shortest tragedy still effortlessly resonates with audiences to this day. *Macbeth*, as Bloom highlights, "... is a visionary drama, and difficult as it is for us to accept that strange genre, a visionary tragedy" (521). Lady Macbeth's terrifying power and strength of character lead Macbeth to commit unspeakable crimes. She commands while he obeys: "... she wills it, he wills nothing, and, paradoxically she collapses while he grows ever more frightening, outraging others, himself outraged, as he becomes the nothing he projects" (522). Why did Shakespeare create such compelling characters if not to mirror our own humanity and deep-seated desires and fears? Macbeth's innate 'humanness' combined with the witches' 'otherworldliness' creates the perfect mix for a timeless classic. Therefore, it is obvious by now why *Macbeth* is perfect for the Japanese stage, specifically the *Noh* and *Kabuki* theatrical styles. Since *Noh* plays continuously focus on the subject of the underworld, Macbeth's tale of sorrow and anguish is perfect for this stage. His presence on the *Noh* stage can be nothing else than that of a ghost in order to truly drive home the impact of his treachery.

As we have seen throughout this work, there are several resemblances between the Renaissance stage and Japanese *Noh* theatre. From staging to costuming, and everything in between, it would seem that *Noh* is an art form that closely resembles Shakespeare's own performance techniques. Surprisingly, even though one is in the East and the other is in the West, both distinctive styles are compatible in terms of Shakespearian adaptations. *Noh* actors,

for instance, have an incredibly similar approach to drama as Shakespeare's Renaissance actors—not in terms of technique, but rather because of their willingness to improvise and be fluid in a performance. Zeami, the great *Noh* playwright and actor of the late fourteenth century and early fifteenth century, made it very clear:

When the author and the actor of a *nō* are different persons, it is impossible for an actor to perform to his full satisfaction. If the actor has written his own play, however, both the text and the gestures can be performed according to his conception. One who can perform the *nō* and has some talent in writing can surely compose one without difficulty. (qt. in Gerstle, "The Concept of Tragedy" 53)

Noh actors were and still are encouraged to make their own corrections to the text. Furthermore, the printed texts of *Noh* plays "... were practice texts complete with musical notation: the reader had to learn aurally from performers how to read the text" (53). This allowed for a fluid and seamless interpretation of the text and, also created a new text in itself, making every performance unique. As we've seen in subchapter 2.3, musicality and rhythm are essential to a *Noh* performance. The rhythm of the spoken word is difficult to translate into English; however, it is very much akin to Shakespeare's own poetic language. The Shakespearian characters in Izumi's play are all expert wordsmiths: they twist and turn the language to suit the narrative, evoking strong images in our minds, even though there is rarely more than one character at once on stage. Indeed, all of Izumi's characters have long monologues, accompanied only by the *hayashi* and *jiutai*, further increasing the musicality of the whole piece. Indeed, "musical rhythm is the organizing principle that gives form to *Noh*, *Bunraku* and *Kabuki* performance. An actor-dominated theatre, as in any primarily oral tradition, develops formulaic patterns. Over time these patterns come to mark the broad outlines of genre ..." (57). This, combined with the slow,

languid movements of the actors—every move is deliberate and calculated—creates a completely new experience of *Macbeth*.

The experience of *Macbeth* on stage is crucial in both its original context and in its more modern iterations. While the English open-air theatre offered an interactive experience for its theatregoers, the closed-quarters of the intimate *Noh* stage allows for a completely different atmosphere to unfold. Although originally open-air as well, modern *Noh* stages are now indoors, allowing for a personal experience of its plays and performances. The *Noh* stage is very much conducive to strange and unnatural settings like in *Macbeth*, where otherworldly creatures live and share the same space as ordinary men and women. *Noh* achieves their representation on stage with rapturous music, frenetic dancing, and haunting dialogue. Indeed, the play slowly works its way into a frenzy of sounds and chants, wherein Macbeth emulates fighting in a battle by erratically dancing across the stage. Zeami was the first to introduce this component to *Noh* plays, making it a core element of the art: “this dance form came to be used at the climax of plays. Zeami described the basis of *kusemai* as the rhythmic beat since singing is done while dancing. All *Noh* plays, being based on the *jo-ha-kyu* structure with its build-up to a single climax, therefore, lead the audience to a moment of extreme musical intensity...” (Gerstle, “The Concept of Tragedy” 60). The musicality of *Noh* enriches Shakespeare’s play and serves to emphasise different parts of the play.

Ultimately, even though Shakespeare’s Jacobean stage is not in use anymore, *Noh* theatre offers a glimpse into what the former might have been like. Due to its rich historical and cultural background, *Noh* is a precious commodity in the world of modern theatre. Its desire to stay true to form and strict acting guidelines ensure that its performances are always at the peak of their perfection. Shakespeare might not have known anything about this art form but, he

certainly would have approved of its way of staging, along with its emphasis on its actors and their talents. Finally, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was the perfect starting point for analysing *Noh* theatre's compatibility with his works. *Macbeth*'s ghosts and witches made it easy to blend the two styles and to create a new story. In a way, *Noh Macbeth* allowed its viewers to see the aftereffects of tyranny, in the form of madness beyond the grave. Shakespeare's famous characters were given a 'second life' through Japan's traditional arts, which is why he remains so relevant today, so far from his native soil.

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